

Thinking about love makes food, drink sweeter

18 October 2013 | News | By BioSpectrum Bureau



Singapore: According to the latest research findings by the University of Singapore, thinking about love or romance makes us perceive the things we eat and drink as sweeter. The scientists conducted a series of experiments and hypothesized that this emotional co-relation could be a result of shared neural reward circuitry associated with experiencing both love and sweetness.

In the first experiment that was conducted, the researchers asked the participants to rate how emotions like love and jealousy related to different tastes, like sweet, spicy, sour, bitter, and salty. In a second experiment, the participants thought about an open-ended question: 'If love were a taste, what would it be?' and wrote down at least two answers. The experiment found that individuals who wrote about love, rated their samples as sweeter

Another group of individuals were primed to feel love or jealousy before eating sweet and sour candy and bittersweet chocolates. While some were asked to write about a romantic experience, others were asked to write about romantic jealousy. The control group wrote essays on landmarks in Singapore. People who wrote about love rated their samples as sweeter than the jealousy or landmark groups. The jealousy group didn't find their candy as any more bitter or sour, despite the correlation in the questionnaires in the first tests.

Furthermore, another group of individuals were brought in to taste a 'new product', which was just distilled water. While some were primed by writing about love, some about jealousy, and others about a control subject, happiness. Thinking about love made the plain, distilled water seem sweeter than thinking about jealousy or happiness.

The researchers have concluded that, "It is possible that when one experiences love that the anterior cingulate cortex would activate representations associated with sweetness, thereby eliciting sweetness sensations even without actual sweetness input from an external source."